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TAGS: [PREL](#) [KPAL](#) [KWBG](#) [EUN](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: SOLANA URGES PROGRESS ON PEACE; ISRAELIS CAUTION
AGAINST UNREALISTIC EXPECTATIONS

Classified By: Ambassador Richard H. Jones; Reasons: 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: During his January 19-21 visit to Israel, High Representative Javier Solana urged his hosts to use the current window of opportunity to make progress with the Palestinians on peace. He expressed full support for the Secretary's idea of developing a "political horizon" and

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working with moderate Arab states, saying these efforts could provide an "umbrella" for the Palestinian negotiators. EC officials said that Solana found the most agreement with Deputy Defense Minister Sneh, adding that both PM Olmert and FM Livni had stressed the need to avoid unrealistic expectations. Livni and Solana disagreed on whether the international community should engage with a possible Palestinian national unity government (NUG) that did not meet the Quartet conditions. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) According to the local EC office, as well as one of Marc Otte's staffers who attended the meetings in Israel, Solana's main message was that the EU sees a window of opportunity for progress on the Israeli-Palestinian agenda. Solana told the Israelis that concern over Iraq and Iran makes moderate Arab states more willing to support the peace process than in the past, providing the Palestinians with an "umbrella" to negotiate. Otte's staffer said that Solana expressed full support for the Secretary's meetings with the GCC-plus-two and her initiative to have the parties define a "political horizon." Livni's special assistant told poloff that Solana had argued that the current weakness of the Israeli Government, the Palestinian President, and the "U.S. administration" means that all three parties would benefit substantially from a deal. Livni replied that moderate leaders are always perceived as weak in the Middle East.

¶3. (C) Solana encountered the strongest agreement from Deputy Defense Minister Efraim Sneh, who described the Labor Party's non-official three-stage peace plan and reportedly expressed a willingness to examine the applicability of the Arab League (Saudi) peace plan. EC officials noted that both Olmert and Livni had advised against raising expectations to a level that would be impossible to meet. Otte's staffer claimed that Solana left his meeting with Olmert with the impression that the PM's office "will not be the motor pushing the process forward."

¶4. (C) Livni and Solana engaged in a lengthy -- and inconclusive -- discussion about overcoming Palestinian resistance to a state with provisional borders. Solana disagreed with his Israeli hosts on dealing with a possible Palestinian NUG, with Livni insisting on full acceptance of the Quartet's principles and Solana responding that a NUG -- even one that does not fully meet the Quartet conditions -- could bring stability and help avoid a Palestinian civil war.

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